

Everyone thought  
he should have kicked it in  
for the great man's funeral expenses

but he didn't  
and that's why my family  
today  
is so enormously wealthy.

-- Billy Collins

Scarsdale, NY

#### INITIAL MEETING

You were like a lost book  
I hadn't finished reading: something  
I thought I'd like. I was at once grateful  
we didn't get to know each other  
well enough to be harsh; and afraid,  
in case we never met again. I heard last night Renoir  
did not make drawings first, therefore his edges blent  
like petals into evening, and I thought  
I'd tell you that. I don't  
especially care for Renoir,  
but I like his method.

#### EMPLOYMENT ON THE COAST

Summer jobs were curious. Once I worked for a man  
who said we would sell jewelry,  
but what we did was pick ticks off his dog  
all day. I was well paid. Often,  
he'd smooth his hands down  
over my waist and say, "How do you like it --  
the way I've fixed up the shop?" We never were lovers,  
although the thought of him destroyed  
my love for another. We watched monster movies  
and the Watergate hearings  
while we groomed the dog, or put earrings on it.  
I thought it was a very good summer,  
though we never were lovers. He was blond as a ghost.  
I conceal his identity here: he didn't  
own the shop and it wasn't his dog. The rest  
is true, and the day we were meant to close the deal,

when we had all that tequila,  
and just enough time,  
a customer came in and bought  
everything we had. The next day  
he moved to Boston  
without paying up the rent  
or my back wages, saying he was sorry,  
he'd been cleaned out.

#### IN MY FASHION

When you arrive  
you say you'll be wearing  
something new -- a long jacket,  
belted in back, maybe  
sunglasses. I should revive  
that rose silk dress  
you liked so much, sighing, "Women  
in skirts," lifting your glass  
to a flirt, a hem rising.

Should I run or just walk  
to meet you, balance my heart on my head,  
improve our posture? I could dress  
to the teeth or to kill you, stun  
by design or carelessness.  
But in my favorite dream the bus  
hums in, you step off, squint,  
and see me striding  
across the lawn, leading a line  
of servants bearing trunks,  
which they place before you. No one  
speaks. I open each box and show you  
the clothes, all in my size,  
from lace to old flannel. You are slow  
to choose, I am getting cold, demand  
some action. With the look of a priest  
you shut the lids, dismiss the maids,  
and wrap me in your jacket. Slightly  
embarrassed, we go off hand in hand.

-- Diane Wald

Sunderland, MA